

Roll Call, March 5, 2009

The controversy sparked by the Capitol Visitor Center's interference with staff-led tours continues to burn fiercely, as D.C. Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D) joined the fray Wednesday.

Norton joined the fight for "better access to the CVC" and said she had scheduled a meeting with Beth Plemmons, the director of Capitol Guide Service, according to a press release from Norton's office.

Earlier this week, Reps. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) and Dave Loebsack (D-Iowa) also protested changes to staff-led tours prompted by the CVC. In a "Dear Colleague" letter also sent to Acting Architect of the Capitol Stephen Ayers, they complained that requiring visitors to go through the CVC's advance registration system means that when the official "Red Coat" tour guides' time slots are full, constituents are unable to get a tour through their Members' offices.

Kirk contends that such a system limits Members' ability to serve their constituents and puts Congressional careers in danger.

The CVC's new rules also require staffers to go through two days of training before giving tours, which the Congressmen saw as unrealistic.

Norton was concerned about the same issues and called for more "flexibility" in the reservation system. She added that staffers might be better able to learn about the Capitol "using readable pamphlets or website materials."

According to Norton's release, "staff ethics training, which is more vital and far more complicated, requires only one hour of training."